United Nations A/AC.259/18

General Assembly

Distr.: General
30 April 2009

Original: English

United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
Tenth meeting
17-19 June 2009

Contribution to the tenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Submitted by the delegation of Nigeria

1. Nigeria believes strongly in the usefulness of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, which was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/33 of 24 November 1999, in order to facilitate the annual review by the Assembly of developments in Ocean Affairs by considering the United Nations Secretary-General's report on oceans and the law of the sea and by suggesting particular issues to be considered by it, with an emphasis on identifying areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced.

2. It was in this vein that Nigeria welcomed and supported the extension of the mandate of the Consultative Process for an additional two-year period.

3. Nigeria finds the topic for the tenth meeting, "Implementation of the outcomes of the Consultative Process, including a review of its achievements and shortcomings, in its first nine meetings", very apt and timely, as we believe that now is a good time for stocktaking.

4. Central to the mandate of the Consultative Process is the identification of areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced. This was discussed at all of the past nine meetings and the tenth meeting will not be an exception. Discussions of the various themes should also include the consideration of tools, measures and strategies to address, in a practical way, the needs, in particular capacity-building needs, identified during consideration of the various themes over the nine-year period.

5. At the ninth meeting, as at many others, the need for capacity-building and assistance to developing States was identified. Since this need still exists and has in some cases become even greater, it is hoped that discussions at the current meeting, under the theme of the implementation of the outcomes of the Consultative Process,

09-31972 (E) 270509

Please recycle

will examine the issue at length. To achieve inclusive deliberations, the Co-Chairpersons are urged to ensure the participation of more panellists from developing countries.

6. Nigeria and many other countries on the African continent are surrounded by ocean bodies — the eastern Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. The ocean bodies surrounding Africa have been sources of resources for the economies of Africa through the exploitation of oil and gas, fisheries, sand and solid mineral aggregates, tourism, transportation, communication, etc. African coastal States have depended on these resources for the alleviation of poverty and for economic growth. Hence, Africa's interest in ocean affairs cannot be over emphasized.

7. Africa believes in the sustainable exploitation and management of the oceans. Hence many of the international conventions, such as the Convention on the Law of the Sea,[1] and the Convention on Biological Diversity,[2] as well as other regional conventions and protocols such as the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment in the West and Central African Region (Abidjan Convention) and the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention), have been supported.

8. Over time, many continental and regional conventions and protocols have been adopted by African States. The Pan-African Conference on Sustainable Integrated Coastal Management, held in Maputo in 1998, as part of the International Year of the Ocean celebration, resulted in a series of high-level commitments to sustainable management and regional coordination. This was followed by the Cape Town Conference (also in 1998), which adopted the Cape Town Declaration. The Declaration included the African Action Plan and Strategy for the Development and Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment in sub-Saharan Africa, otherwise known as the African Process.

9. The African Process received broad political support and contributed to generating awareness at all levels of governance in Africa. The African Process was endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of States and Government of Africa, held in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002, as the coastal and marine component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.[3]

10. Despite all of the above undertakings, the objective of ensuring the availability of reliable, up-to-date, accessible data and information on integrated coastal area management and the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources is still far from being realized.

11. Africa has experienced rapid increases in population, oil and gas prospecting and production, industrialization and urbanization in the last 50 years. The continent, especially its coastal States, faces problems in respect of fisheries depletion, water pollution, including occasional spillage from crude oil production, public health and sanitation, loss of habitat and biodiversity, land use and planning, and coastal erosion. Recent regional and national assessments have found significant degradation of the natural resources and biodiversity of the coastal and

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 18-33, No. 31363.
[2] Ibid., vol. 1760, No. 30619.
[3] A/57/304, annex.

international waters and adjacent freshwater catchment areas. Issues connected with such degradation include:

- Physical alteration and destruction of habitats
- Habitat degradation by pollution
- Coastal development and tourism
- Overfishing and associated socio-economic consequences for coastal communities
- Ineffective policies and lack of efficient management systems
- Lack of enforcement of existing legislation on coastal area management and exploitation of marine resources
- Limited technical capacity for assessment, and formulation of effective management plans
- Limited scientific knowledge and monitoring of key habitats, species and activities, etc.

12. As mentioned above, the establishment of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in 1999 had, as one of its main objectives, the identification of areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels should be enhanced. Many countries in Africa lack the necessary capacities in major areas of ocean activities such as research, habitat/ecosystem alteration and destruction, monitoring, surveillance, combating impact of climate change and sea-level rise, pollution, etc.

13. It is expected that the Consultative Process shall henceforth advocate more pragmatic approaches for the enhancement of the coordination and implementation of ocean affairs-related activities in developing countries.